

**Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center**  
**Avalanche Advisory**

Contact: Kevin Davis (208) 265-6686, Ed Odegaard (208) 245-6209, or John Olson (208) 265-6608

This message available by calling (208) 765-7323 or toll-free at 1-866-489-8664.

E-mail address: [kevingdavis@fs.fed.us](mailto:kevingdavis@fs.fed.us), [eodegaard@fs.fed.us](mailto:eodegaard@fs.fed.us), [jrolson@fs.fed.us](mailto:jrolson@fs.fed.us)

This is Kevin Davis who is glad to be able to report on some new snow in this morning's Idaho Panhandle avalanche advisory, valid for today, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and will remain in effect through midnight, February 12<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Selkirk Powder Company and Schweitzer Ski Patrol for their observations yesterday. This advisory is sponsored by Idaho Parks and Recreation.

**WEATHER**

Recall that for the past week and a half that we have had very mild weather and a few snow storms that brought us light accumulations. This had a stabilizing effect on the lower snowpack. Some reports are identifying some weakness in the layer of snow that is now buried about 2 feet deep over a slight crust. Beginning on Wednesday this week more appreciable amounts of snow are falling in the mountains with warming temperatures. In the Cabinets-7 inches of accumulation, Selkirks-2 inches north and 8 inches south, Lookout Pass-2inches, and Lost Lake-8inches. The main thing to watch today and this weekend will be wind and temperature affecting the layering of new snow or loading the 2 foot deep layer that is still showing some sensitivity. The NWS is calling for 100% chance of snow today with 2-4 inches of new snow to the north and 1-3 inches to the south. Winds will be out of the SW at 10-15mph and temperatures will hover in the lower to mid 30s. Tonight a very good chance exists for 2-4 more inches of snow, temperatures falling into the 20s and moderate W to SW winds. The outlook for Saturday and Sunday calls for a slightly better than average chance of an inch or less of new snow with temperatures in the mid to low 30s and winds abating out of the W/SW. **The avalanche danger will persist for the outlook period.**

**Avalanche conditions for the Selkirk and Cabinet Mountains are rated as MODERATE on wind-loaded aspects greater than 35 degrees above 4,500 feet.**

Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible.

**Avalanche conditions are rated as LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.** Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely.

Snowpack

IN the Selkirk Mountains some instability was found about 2 feet deep in the layer that formed when snow fell on a firm surface layer on about January 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup>. Because of the mild and cool weather this layer has persisted in the pack but has gained strength. Your main concern will be layers forming in the new snow from this Wednesday since mountain temperatures have been on the rise in most areas. This is creating denser snow over lighter snow. Wind will also exacerbate this condition and increase the instability.

It won't be hard to check for this layering so do it often as you climb and change aspects. Rain will quickly increase the avalanche hazard in this snowpack.

#### Terrain

Winds will be prevailing out of the W/SW so look for easterly (NE-SE) aspects to be loaded. Spatial variability will be a factor because of temperature changes and wind. Areas of wind loading will be more sensitive and there could be places where the avalanche hazard is pushing CONSIDERABLE.

**Avalanche conditions for the St. Regis Basin are rated as MODERATE on wind-loaded aspects greater than 35 degrees above 4,500 feet.** Natural avalanches are unlikely and human triggered avalanches are possible. **Avalanche conditions are rated as LOW on slopes less than 35 degrees.** Natural and human triggered avalanches are unlikely.

#### Snowpack

On Lookout Pass, Dan found the weakest layer to be the new snow accumulation from January 28<sup>th</sup> that was just over 1 foot deep. Shear were reacting with moderate force and not too smooth but the structure of this layer is indicating that it could be triggered. Pockets of the buried surface hoar are out there but Dan said it is gaining strength in most instances. Look for the PWL of surface hoar to be most intact on north aspects. Spatial variability is high across the slopes so check conditions often. Rain is a real possibility around the Pass this weekend so be ready to call it a day if that happens.

#### Terrain

Dan did not notice any recent avalanche activity in the Basin yesterday. Travel was easy and he traversed from north to south aspects and climbed to 6,000 feet so he covered some ground. His main concern is for wind-loaded slopes and that will likely happen later today with the onset of the next round of precipitation. Cornices will weaken with warming temperatures and rain. Stay off steep slopes if you notice the temperature starting to rise; snow falling out of the trees. Look for the easterly aspects to be loaded and more suspect for avalanche hazard.

Ed was not able to get out in the St. Joe's yesterday but he mentioned that he will definitely hit the hills next week.

The next advisory will be issued on Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Free snowmobile avalanche class in Sandpoint tonight and the field session tomorrow. We should have space still so give me a call or just show up!

If you have a group or club that is interested in more education on avalanche safety we will be available for free avalanche awareness classes beginning in December, so feel free to give us a call. As usual we would appreciate hearing from anyone who happens to observe any recent avalanche activity while out in the backcountry or just wants to let us know what is going on in their area. You can reach Kevin Davis in Sandpoint by calling (208) 265-6686.

Avalanche conditions change for better or worse continually. Backcountry travelers should be prepared to assess current conditions for themselves, plan their routes of travel accordingly, and never travel alone. Backcountry travelers can reduce their exposure to avalanche hazards by utilizing timbered trails and ridge routes and by avoiding open and exposed terrain with slope angles of 30 degrees or more. Backcountry travelers should carry the necessary avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche probe or probe ski poles, a rescue beacon and a well-equipped first aid kit.

Have a safe and pleasant weekend.